

OUT OF TIME

Issue No. 14

Out of Control--Lesbian Committee to Support Women Political Prisoners

June 1992

FOR THE DYKES INSIDE

The biggest public gathering to take place in San Francisco each year is the Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade. In the spirit of Lesbian and Gay Pride, this issue of Out Of Time is dedicated to Judy Clark, Norma Jean Croy, Linda Evans, Susan Rosenberg, Laura Whitehorn and all the dykes inside prisons and jails. As part of this special issue we have messages from Linda, Susan & Laura, and updates on Judy and Norma Jean.

NEWS FROM LINDA

LOVE AND SOLIDARITY TO ALL OF YOU AS WE CELEBRATE gay PRIDE. especially, thank you for your support for political prisoners and POW'S and special thanks to LAGAI and OOC for their commitment to our day-to-day survival as well as the overall campaign to win our freedom.

Here at FCI-Pleasanton, I am a full time landscape worker-one of my best survival mechanisms for coping with the pettiness and repression we're forced to live with. I am deeply involved in Pleasanton AIDS Counseling and Education(PLACE), that is growing in numbers, commitment, and programmatic responsibilities. PLACE was approved as an official inmate organization, and we conduct regular AIDS education presentations at new inmate orientation sessions and at the pre-release seminars held for women scheduled to go home in the next six months. At Children's Day this year (children 16 and under spend a day with their mothers/grandmothers),

PLACE will sponsor an AIDS Awareness booth designed to help women talk with their children, especially teenagers, about AIDS. Later this summer, PLACE members will help teach a course on Women and AIDS, using parts of a curriculum designed by Susan Rosenberg for women at FCI-Marianna. As a peer educator and member of PLACE, I listen to, talk and cry with HIV+ women here, trying to offer support in their struggles to survive and stay healthy under the tremendous stress of prison life.

Recently, a Council on Racism was formed to try to solve some of the problems associated with the international composition of the population and to work on improving relations between different racial/national groups. Its first project is to advocate support for women who speak languages other than English-to seek approval for prison translators, to ensure that forms and procedures are translated, and to document the need for a bilingual liaison. Such a Council is limited by our own powerlessness and lack of freedom. We hope that the Council will help encourage cross-cultural appreciation and respect, and minimize overt bigotry and discrimination on the part of staff as well as prisoners.

For nearly 25 years I have worked politically against racism, police brutality and police murder, yet it seems that the scene of Rodney King being beaten by police has been and will be endlessly repeated in different communities. No one agreed with the Simi Valley verdict-most prisoners have experienced police brutality and recognize the absolute injustice of the court system. But in many ways, the response of the white women here was very mainstream, they were reluctant to identify the verdict as racist, and couldn't understand the violence and destructiveness of the uprising, especially since the media portrayed it as destruction of their own neighborhoods by the people involved. The discussions and reactions here, and the interactions between women of different races, made me painfully aware of the profound racism, prejudice and blind ignorance deep in the hearts of the vast majority of white people here and certainly on the streets. The Simi Valley verdict was not an aberration-it is typical of the attitudes of white people and of the direction the criminal "justice" system and society as a whole are taking. Even though each of us may be anti-racist in our individual lives, circles of friends and

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Notes from Laura

Dear Sisters and Brothers, Life here at Lex continues as usual. This means three major things: increasing repression and regimentation, medical neglect and racism.

My energy (what's left after 8 hours of mowing grass) has been focused on AIDS education and support, ever since the end of Black History Month. It's taken a lot of trying, but we finally have a regular support group. This was actually harder to achieve than the more generalized educational work, because it involves a level of acceptance by HIV+ prisoners of their illness, as well as a level of seriousness and consistent commitment by everyone involved. All of this runs directly counter to the constant messages and enforcement of powerlessness, pettiness and shame the prison puts on us, not to mention the complete lack of medical attention and counseling for HIV+ prisoners. So our support group will contribute to saving lives and improving the quality of life for HIV+ prisoners.

We had a great Black History Month, including weekly showings of segments of *Eyes on the Prize*, and culminating in an original show-*"Black History in Living Color"* portraying Black women in history from Nefertiti to Betty Shabazz and Winnie Mandela.

The power and pride of the month lasted-but more and more the usual level of racist garbage is reasserting itself. After the Rodney King verdict (the verdict: Amerikka is guilty of white supremacy), the administration beefed up the police force in here, to "prevent trouble." They got themselves so psyched up that they ended up creating trouble-accusing a Black woman of "inciting a race riot" when she argued with a white woman over an iron: but not a word was said about "race" in the argument! and no one was incited to do anything. (There are over 20 witnesses-I'm one of them-that nothing was said about "race" until the police wrote it on the incident report and locked up the Black woman but not the white woman!) Just goes to show-racism rots the brain.

As a womanist or feminist and a lesbian, one of the struggles I keep having to take on in prison is against the constant threat of sexual abuse by the police: complete lack of privacy-male guards patrol our living units, the inability to protect your own body from invasive searches-we are regularly pat searched by male guards. It's deeply degrading and corrosively dehumanizing.

Currently, I'm involved in a process of administrative complaint about one particular guard whose "routine pat search" includes stroking the prisoner's breast. A few of us are on the second round of administrative grievances-having been told by the warden, after the first round, that the improper searches "didn't happen"! (Sound familiar, girls?)

Oh-did I mention that a good chunk of the women this guard pat searched improperly, are known dykes? Stay tuned for the next installment of this drama of sex and power!

So-that's about it for the moment from Klantucky. I wish I could be with you all to demonstrate, strike on May 19th and I will be with you in spirit on June 28th as well. When you march on Gay Day please raise a fist for me. Venceremos! LW



UPDATE ON NORMA JEAN

The following solidarity statement was written last year by members of Gay American Indians, LAGAI, OOC, and Revolting Lesbians.

Norma Jean Croy is a Native American Lesbian imprisoned since 1978 for a killing she did not commit. Both she and her brother, Patrick Hooty Croy, were shot in the back by police. In self-defense, Hooty shot back and an off-duty, drunken officer was killed. Hooty was given the death penalty and Norma Jean, who never touched the weapon, a life sentence. Both are still living with bullets lodged near their spinal cords.

Due to public pressure, Hooty Croy was retried. The jury recognized the history of racism and Indian-killing for sport in Northern California. Hooty was acquitted on grounds of self-defense in May 1990. Despite Hooty's acquittal, the government was refused to release Norma Jean Croy.

Before Hooty was retried and acquitted, very little attention had been paid to Norma Jean's situation. We believe this is a product of the sexism, as well as the racism, that pervades every aspect of life in the United States. Norma Jean Croy is in prison today because she is an Indian woman and because she is a lesbian. The racist forces which perpetuate the genocide of Native American Peoples are the same forces which prevent Lesbian and Gay Liberation.

Being an OUT LESBIAN behind prison walls can be a life and death struggle. As lesbians and gays we support Norma Jean Croy. Her fight for freedom from prison is our fight for freedom too.

We feel we need to tell the public about Norma Jean Croy's situation to expose one of the many injustices perpetuated by the U.S. government. There are many people in prison because of poverty, racism, homophobia and political repression. As the U.S. economic and social structure deteriorates, racist and sexist terror escalates. Anti-lesbian and anti-gay violence and repression are on the rise all over the country. All the while social services and jobs are replaced by war and jails.

Norma Jean Croy's fifth parole hearing is next month - JULY 16th. Her lawyer is asking that people write letters of support addressed to the Board of Prison Terms and mail them to Norma Jean Croy Defense Committee, 473 Jackson St. 3rd Floor, S.F. CA 94111.

Help free an innocent woman from prison. It has been 14 years.



From Susan Rosenberg

Greetings Brothers and SISTERS,

OOC and LAGAI have continually supported me and other political prisoners for several years. Since the successful struggle against the High Security Unit at Lexington your support has been a great help in maintaining my spirit of resistance. It has also been OOC with others that has struggled and encouraged me to come out as a lesbian, and finally after much internal turmoil and debate I realized that you were right. Thank you!!!

In the past year and a half since the resolution of the Washington D.C. case called the "Resistance Conspiracy Case" I have been at the women's control unit in Marianna, Florida. I am with Silvia Baraldini and Marilyn Buck, and 90 other women. We three have been told that we are here as a result of our political association with the Black Liberation Movement. We have been told that we will never be transferred into general population. We are trying to develop a way to resist the human rights violations of this unit and the political repression within our situation.

Since arriving here the changes in the world have been cataclysmic. The US war against Iraq, the break-up of the Soviet Empire, the peace accords in El Salvador, the rebellion in Los Angeles. Despite the profound isolation, these events and changes serve to deepen my commitment to anti-imperialist, anti-white supremacy, women's liberation and gay and lesbian liberation. Doing AIDS advocacy in prison has also served to strengthen a resolve that the solutions we need are fundamental. Because this is a time when all people engaged in the social project for human liberation must assess, and reassess, and find the means to overcome the crisis and fragmentation and lack of vision we face I believe now more than ever all U.S. held political prisoners need to be incorporated into the political process of this period. We need to be put back on the movements agenda. We are all in prison because we have identified and attacked the very particular systemic conflicts that are now causing explosions and rebellion in the country. The ability to gain justice for us is integrally bound with the development of an increasingly radical and emergent movement. Barbara Smith said after the L.A. rebellion "We need a revolution, nothing short of it." I agree. Again thanks. La Luta Continua. Venceremos, Susan Rosenberg, Anti-imperialist, political prisoner.



JUDY CLARK

Judy Clark is a north american political prisoner. She received a 75 year-life sentence for her participation in a Brinks robbery in

1981 and is incarcerated in the State Correctional Institution in Bedford Hills, NY. Since she first entered prison, Judy has been working with ACE (AIDS Counseling and Education), a group she helped create. ACE is a model program for other prisoners trying to deal with the rising incidence of AIDS inside and the indifference of prison officials. Over the last ten years, the warden at Bedford has shut ACE down, tried to co-opt it, allowed it to exist, not allowed Judy to work with the project because of her 'political views' and then went through the cycle again.

Judy is also taking college classes to get a degree, and being hassled by the prison authorities about it.



Women Political Prisoners in Israel

The Women's Organization for Political Prisoners (WOPP) in Tel Aviv prints a newsletter that is the only source of information on Israeli prisons. Sent out every two months, the newsletter describes the conditions at various prisons and the individual situations of different women prisoners. Each time, one woman's case is described in detail and names of the appropriate officials to protest to are given. Conditions for women (and men) in Israeli prisons are barbaric, but there is very little information available. April's newsletter also mentioned a demonstration organized by WOPP, with other Palestinian and Israeli women's groups, to demand better conditions for the prisoners. To receive the newsletter, send \$12.50/year to NACC, 1747 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington DC 20009 or just write for more info.

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attitudes, it is also our responsibility to try to change the structure... Nobody knows what strategy will work to win these changes. If we make fighting racism a priority in all our work...we can figure out a way to make a difference. In Struggle/for Revolution, Linda.

SIMI VALLEY AND BEYOND

Respectfully we excerpt from June Jordan's "Burning all illusions tonight" (Bay Guardian, May 6, 1992). A Black women and political writer, June Jordan is a leading poet of international acclaim.

What happened? How come we finally woke up? Why would a jury's verdict of "Not Guilty" galvanize and rescue so many from protracted/profound passivity, suicidal torpor, and fratricidal craziness? How come all of the steady, punitive, self-righteous, and official attacks on poor people didn't get us going? How come presidential vetoes of civil rights legislation and the unspeakable insult of Clarence Thomas as proposed replacement for Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall didn't push us into the streets?

How come the senseless and racist throwaway of 42 billion on Operation Desert Storm didn't pack the highways with a 3,000-mile-long caravan of fired-up folk determined to evict killer lunatics from the White House and the Pentagon? How come?

It's in our minds, in everyone's minds what happened those days in May, in LA and everywhere. We don't want to spend time saying those things we all know. The point is: police brutality against people of color happens all the time. Police brutality is a hate crime supported by the economic system. In the courtroom people of color don't get a fair shake. It's clear the (mis)justice system is truly blind and in 1992 a picture is worth zero.

But what now? What do we do? Make the issue of racism a priority-in our lives, in our community, at work, at school, anywhere and everywhere...

Below are excerpts from Alexander Cockburn's "Beat The Devil" (The Nation, June 1, 1992) which presents the Bloods/Crips program for their community. It's not what we'll find in The Chronicle-the complete article is well worth reading!

1. Proposal for South Central L.A.'s face lift (\$2 billion for reconstruction)...2. Proposal for Education (\$700 million for all phases of school from bathrooms to landscape to books to accelerated education programs)...3. Human Welfare Proposal (\$1 billion to eliminate welfare for productive jobs and

focus on children, 3 new hospitals, 40 health care and dental clinics)...4. Law Enforcement Program (\$6 million self imposed law from within the community)...5. Economic Development Proposal (\$20 million in small business loans at 4% with 90% hiring from the community).

IN RETURN FOR THESE DEMANDS THE BLOODS/CRIPS WILL: 1. Request drug lords of L.A. to invest money in business, property...2. Encourage drug lords to stop drug traffic...use money constructively...Bloods/Crips will match funds of state gov't appropriations...3. Match funds for AIDS research center in S.C. and Long Beach...

GIVE US THE HAMMER AND THE NAILS, WE WILL REBUILD THE CITY.



ANOTHER CALIFORNIA NIGHTMARE - PELICAN BAY

The name "Pelican Bay" under normal circumstances conjures up a real pleasant image - like a day dream. Unfortunately the California Department of "Corrections" turned the thought into a nightmare in December of '89 when it unveiled a bleak, grey concrete, high-tech torture chamber to become known as THE PELICAN BAY SHU.... SHU standing for Security Housing Unit. The Pelican Bay SHU cost California tax payers \$224 million. It was supposed to house 2,080 prisoners and is already overcrowded.

This prison, located near the Oregon border, is futuristic and medieval at the same time. The human rights violations are unspeakable. The name of the game is complete physical and mental control.

Prisoners rarely have contact with another human, not even the guards. Electronic surveillance has replaced guards. Alone in his 8-by-10 foot, windowless cell behind a thick steel-plated door, the SHU prisoner sits idle for 22 1/2 hours each day, monitored by video cameras and microphones. He never sees the light of day... He eats alone from a dinner tray passed through a slot in the door. Once a day he may exercise alone in a small bare space called the "dog walk" but must be strip-searched first. He's got no work, no educational programs, no religious services, no counseling, no hobbies, no nothin! He is not even allowed to draw. It gets worse. To add insult to injury there have been numerous reports of excessive force and beatings, humiliation, "sheet restriction"

(i.e. no bedding), "cup restriction" (can't drink), etc.

Unfortunately this type of control unit and the use of solitary confinement is being increasingly adopted by more State systems. (The Feds set such a fine example with Marion.) It's part of a capitalist and racist strategy to warehouse poor people and people of color in the prisons of the land... and thwart the possibility of any prison uprising. There were demonstrations against control units throughout the country during the month of May. With enough pressure we can shut these places down.. (remember the Lexington Control Unit). Contact the PELICAN BAY INFORMATION PROJECT for more info or send donations to: PBIP, 2489 Mission St., #28, San Francisco, CA 94110.

GET YOUR FUCKING HANDS OFF ME

"Get your fucking hands off me" ... not an unlikely response for a woman to give a strange man who has just laid his hands on her without invitation... depending on how big he is, and how angry she is, there's a good chance he'd get his face punched or a kick in the balls. Unfortunately our sisters inside don't have the "luxury" of expressing their anger verbally, never mind taking a slug at the guy. In a time when the American Medical Association has released statistics showing that one of the greatest health hazards to women is physical abuse by men (in 1990, 30% of all women murdered were killed by their husband), the courts of this great land have repeatedly upheld the practice of male guards pat-searching women prisoners. Most recently on the west coast, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals held that a Washington prison's policy of subjecting fully clothed female inmates to random pat searches by male as well as female guards does not violate constitutional rights. If the sisters inside resist this invasion on any level they can expect severe punishment, e.g. isolation in a segregated cell, property confiscation, denial of phone and commissary privileges, etc... And this pat-search routine doesn't just happen occasionally - it's an everyday thing.... think about it.

ACT-UP LEADS DEMONSTRATION IN SACRAMENTO

On June 1st, a large group of AIDS activists, led by ACT-UP, converged on the state capitol in Sacramento. Carrying placards and signs that read "Prisoners with AIDS Demand the Right to Live!" and "Unmask the California Death Camps", the protesters later brought their message to the doors of the state prison administration, the California Department of Corrections (CDoC).

There is no accurate account of the number of HIV+ prisoners in the state (California does not do mandatory HIV testing), but a recent study by the Centers for Disease Control estimates that over 5% of the population or over 6,000 prisoners are HIV+. The CDoC initially responded to the AIDS epidemic by isolating all known HIV+ prisoner. There was a major lawsuit that was settled, but hundreds of prisoners are still segregated and receive little or no necessary medical and psychological care and treatment. CDoC was forced to admit to an ACT-UP delegation that it has no comprehensive plan for the treatment of prisoners with HIV and AIDS. Prisoners with AIDS are dying daily in California prisons.

Prison sentences become death sentences for prisoners with AIDS because of discrimination, segregation and substandard medical care. A large budget deficit in the state may become the CDoC excuse for not re-staffing the prisons with competent HIV experts and for not developing a comprehensive and humane plan treatment plan for prisoners with HIV/AIDS. We cannot let this happen. For more information contact ACT-UP/SF at 415-563-0724 or ACT-UP/LA at 213-669-7301.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE STEPS UP ACTIVITY

Our warmest welcome to "El Bienteveo Libre" the newsletter of the West Coast Chapter of the National Committee To Free Puerto Rican POWs and Political Prisoners. The Bay Area has been host to the newsletter as well as 3 or 4 events, including a brunch, political gatherings and cultural performances during the past few months. These efforts and others are aimed at affirming Puerto Rico's right to independence and achieving freedom for the 19 Puerto Rican women and men who are scattered in prisons throughout the United States. The faces of these women and men can be seen all over San Francisco, Berkeley and Oakland. Every month a new poster is printed up, 17" x 22", with a huge photograph of one of the comrades.

The National Committee is also continuing an all out effort to stop the mistreatment of Oscar Lopez Rivera. Serving 55 years for seditious conspiracy and an additional 15 for an alleged attempt to escape, Oscar has been held for an unprecedented length of time on the "D" block of Marion Penitentiary. Conditions at Marion prison are condemned by Amnesty International. Prisoners are sent there as an extra form of punishment, and if they "graduate" from "D" block, they are sent to prisons with less restrictive conditions. Oscar has been confined to "D" block, the worst unit, for the past three years, despite an impeccable record. This treatment is clearly political. To protest Oscar's treatment call Warden Turner at Marion: tel. # 1-618-964-1441 and demand his transfer. If you wish to contribute articles to "El Bienteveo Libre", make a donation, and get additional information, write the National Committee at 3543 18th Street, Box 12, San Francisco, CA 94110.

Lompoc Prison Strike

Immediately following the LA uprising, prisoners at FCI Lompoc (federal correctional institution north of LA) joined in a prison-wide general strike for 3 days. Prison officials were greatly threatened by the unity of the prisoners: hundreds of men were put in the hole and teargassed, five hundred were immediately transferred out.

New Afrikan political prisoner Dr. Mutulu Shakur, convicted of conspiracy in the liberation of Assata Shakur, faces transfer to Marion (notorious high security prison in Illinois). He is charged with "encouraging a disturbance." Previously Dr. Shakur's security level was lowered, making a transfer to a minimum security prison a possibility. We will keep you informed.

LESBIAN AND GAY PRISONERS ANTHOLOGY

OOC recently received a letter from Lin Elliott, a prisoner in Clallam Bay, WA. - "a 28 year old gay man of Cherokee/Scotch/Irish descent". He is editing an anthology of writing and art work by Lesbian and Gay prisoners, entitled COLD IRON, that will be published by Cleis Press in mid 1993, and also working to organize a support network called The League of Lesbian and Gay Prisoners. All pieces should be 3,000 words or less if possible and be submitted by the end of September, 1992. Mr. Elliott hopes the anthology will be a powerful medium for communication between prisoners and the outside world. Submissions or correspondence can be sent to Lin Elliott c/o John Fall, 1457-B 22 Ave, Seattle WA 98122. Please pass the word around.

COMMISSARY FUND GARAGE SALE

LAGAI and OOC held our second annual garage sale on June 13, and it was a huge success. We raised over \$1300 for the Commissary Fund for Women Political Prisoners and POWs, and had fun doing it. The women use the money to purchase stamps, shampoo, tampons, candy bars, fruit, etc. from prison commissaries. Prices are higher than our local drugstores.

Thanks to Mark and Sandy for the use of their sidewalk, and all the other people for their help and donations.

The Commissary Fund is always open for donations. Make checks out to LAGAI, and mail to OOC, 3543 18th Street, Box 30, SF, CA 94110.

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